



June 20, 2005

Mr. Paul Dabbs, Chief  
Water Resources Evaluation Section  
Statewide Water Planning Branch  
California Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 942836  
Sacramento, California 94236-0001

Re: California Water Plan Update 2005, Public Comments & Recommendation

Dear Mr. Dabbs –

Please consider inclusion in Chapter 22, Volume 2 of the California Water Plan Update 2005 the use of multifamily common area laundry facilities as a practical, cost-effective method for achieving additional urban water use efficiency.

In 2002, the National Research Center in Boulder, Colorado conducted a national study comparing laundry-water use rates of apartment residents whose buildings have common area laundry rooms with the use rates of apartment residents whose buildings have clothes washers in each unit. **The study found that residents with in-apartment clothes washers used 330% more water than residents who used their property's common area laundry rooms.** Not surprising, it was also revealed that in-unit clothes washers used 5 times more energy than common area laundry rooms.

Additionally, in May 2002, the United State Department of Housing and Urban Development issued a guidebook title, "Overview of Retrofit Strategies: A Guide for Apartment Owners and Managers" which states, "the volume of water used for laundry per apartment unit was almost four times higher in properties that had in-unit clothes washers." It went on to say, "Dwellers apparently adjust their laundry habits when they have to use common area washers." In other words, the convenience of in-unit clothes washers lends itself to residents actually doing more loads of wash than they normally would if they were using common area laundry facilities.

The genius of this conservation method is that there are virtually **no costs** involved with promoting the benefits of common laundry facilities. Considering that approximately 21.5% of the water consumed in a typical apartment building is used for laundry purposes, this presents a clear opportunity to conserve water. Furthermore, compared to other conservation methods such as hardware retrofits, Xeriscaping, and the use of new

technologies, this method would serve as a simple, effective, and common sense component of California's long-term water conservation plan.

As an example, the San Diego Water Conservation Action Council supports the retention of common area laundry facilities because the magnitude of water conservation from retaining twenty-five percent of central laundry facilities was 55% greater than the conservation benefit achieved after five years of the H-axis laundry machine rebate program (217 AFY conserved at a cost of \$875,000).<sup>1</sup>

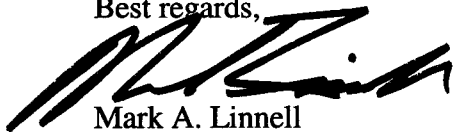
With all of that being said, the issue of common laundry facilities has taken on greater significance in recent years. In addition to California's increasing population and unpredictable weather patterns (i.e. droughts), there has been and continues to be a growing trend toward condo conversions and new apartment building construction that add in-unit clothes washer hook-ups and eliminate the common area facility. San Diego is a prime example. Between 2001-2002, condo conversions tripled to 619. In 2003, conversions soared to more than 2,300. Not only does this increase the demand for water, but it also impacts wastewater management and peak treatment capacities, which are expensive to accommodate.

**Therefore, I highly recommend that Chapter 22, Urban Water Use Efficiency, in Volume 2, Resource Management Strategies, of the California Water Plan Update 2005 include the use of common area laundry facilities as a practical, cost-effective method for achieving additional urban water use efficiency.**

Please feel free to contact me at your convenience should you have any questions or need additional information.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan.

Best regards,



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**Attachment** National Research Center's "A National Study of Laundry-Water Use in Multi-Housing"

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<sup>1</sup> 25 percent retention of common area laundry facilities in the City of San Diego provides 338 acre-feet per year of conserved water **at no cost**. During the last five years, the City of San Diego's H-axis rebate program has yielded 217 acre feet per year of conserved water at a total cost of \$875,000.